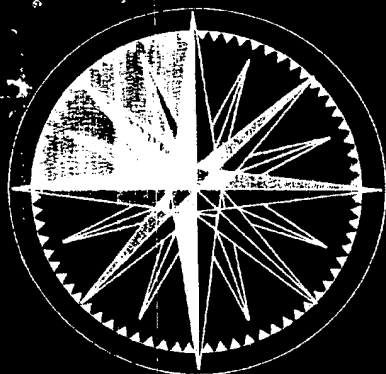


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SPECIAL REPORT

THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY TODAY

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16 October 1964

THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY TODAY

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) is the second largest, and the most influential Communist party in a developed country. It is the leading exponent in the non-Communist world of greater autonomy for national Communist parties within a framework generally acceptable to Moscow. Although PCI membership is declining, the party has captured slightly over a quarter of the national vote in Italy, and its ability to attract support is now at an all-time high. The party has managed to effect a smooth transition from Palmiro Togliatti's leadership to that of Luigi Longo, the former Vice Secretary General. The party has long had some difficult internal problem, but it is very unlikely that its strength will be significantly diminished in the foreseeable future. Passage and implementation of the Moro government's reform program offers the best chance for a gradual reduction of the PCI's appeal to the Italian electorate. The PCI's influence could also be further reduced should it become politically possible for the Nenni Socialists to sever their remaining ties with the PCI in the trade union confederation and in local government administrations.

The Role of Togliatti

Palmiro Togliatti, one of the last of the Comintern leaders of the mid-1920s, helped establish the PCI in 1921 and was its unchallenged boss for almost 30 years before his death last August. His prestige and political ability enabled him to control internal rivalries for power and facilitated effective party discipline. Togliatti always favored and, whenever possible, pushed for refinements and changes in classic Marxist doctrine in the best interests of PCI, but never to the extent of outright con-

flict with the USSR. In his last "testament"--as in 1956--for example, he pressed for fuller and more rapid "de-Stalinization." Although the PCI was forced to pull back in 1956, the publication of the final testament emphasized more strongly than ever before its determination to maintain a public image of autonomy in order to push strategies tailored to fit circumstances in Italy.

Togliatti, like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, (CPSU), was convinced that revolution by armed struggle would be disastrous in Italy except

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under conditions where the party was able to secure power in cooperation with a broad range of popular forces in reacting, for example, to an attempted coup from the right. They believed that the Italian Communist Party and, in fact, all Western European Communist parties, could best achieve power gradually by tactical alliances with other leftist parties to transform the "bourgeois state" by reform.

Since Togliatti's death, party leaders have emphasized that his policies will be continued in toto. It has always been an absolute necessity to emphasize party unity, and it is particularly so now on the eve of the national municipal elections next month.

Longo's Position

Despite the smooth transfer of leadership, Togliatti's death brings to the forefront some of the party's knottier problems. Potentially the most disruptive of these is the possibility that the PCI's policies under Longo's leadership will sooner or later be challenged. His solution to the problem of naming a vice secretary general is likely to give the first indication of his prospects.

Longo's accession is viewed by most observers as a stopgap measure, but it could yet prove to be a stable arrangement. Longo will almost certainly find it much more difficult than Togliatti did

to conciliate opposing positions within the party.

It is also apparent that he will not attempt to wear as many "hats" as Togliatti did. Longo may try to maintain a relative power balance among the other leaders, but he may find himself confronted with an effort to establish a collegial leadership. Another handicap Longo must overcome is his popular identification as a "Stalinist." A strong effort is being made to dispel this image.

Longo, on the other hand, holds some strong cards, probably the most important of which is Soviet support. Party leaders also recognize the need to keep ranks closed to avoid giving the impression that the party's elan will deteriorate without Togliatti. Longo, moreover, is a hardboiled, tireless worker who has occupied the number-two slot in the party hierarchy since the end of the war.



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He can be expected to exploit this advantage to consolidate his power between now and the next party congress scheduled for December 1965. Finally, the manner of Longo's release of Togliatti's last writing probably helped establish his claim as the rightful heir to the top position.

Longo's Competition

Longo's potential rivals include Giancarlo Pajetta and Giorgio Amendola, representing the party's so-called "revisionist" wing on the right, and Pietro Ingrao, who is currently identifying himself as a spokesman for the left.

The things Amendola, Pajetta, and Ingrao have in common outweigh their differences. The three men realize that it is essential that the party avoid a public exposure of their fight to achieve a clear ascendancy. Moreover, they are presently committed to Togliatti's policies on most basic issues, including the autonomy of national Communist parties and opposition to a Sino-Soviet showdown.

Party Politics

The basic differences of opinion within the party are matters of interpretation of the party line, particularly what tactics are to be followed toward the center-left. These cannot be readily categorized as representing right or left "factional" positions. The

large "center" of the party is more or less in general agreement on policies.

Although the party as a whole is concerned over how to adapt itself to the conditions of an increasingly affluent society, the main point of difference among its members is how far and how fast it must go in this process. The "rightists" argue that the PCI cannot remain permanently in opposition without eventually facing demoralization and disintegration. They, therefore, stress the need to achieve power within the limits imposed by the democratic system. In this connection, the party has made a strong attempt to obscure its essentially authoritarian and subversive nature and develop a public image as a democratic force prepared to step down, once in power, if its popular mandate were lost. The right wing also favors joining forces with other parties on the left in promoting specific projects which they think will push Italy toward the gradual acceptance of Socialism.

In general, the positions held by the right wing are in line with those that Togliatti propounded although the "right," in contrast with the "left," advocates that tactics be employed to permit a broader and more rapid adaption to the changing Italian society.

The party's "left" has severely criticized the leadership particularly for not having

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made a stronger effort to block the formation of the center-left government and wants a much more aggressive opposition to it. Leftists' deplore the party's "moderate" stand against the government as little more than "bourgeois" democratic opposition, and argue that present policies will result in the loss of party integrity. The left-wingers argue that as the PCI moves to the right in its attempt to transform the state from within--which they realize is necessary--it runs the danger of being transformed and loses its Communist character.

The Party "Democracy" Problem

A debate is now intensifying among the party's rank and file over the lack of intra-party democracy in determining party policies. In Togliatti's day, policy formulation, to a considerable degree, was a one-man operation. His decisions stuck because the party organizations were tightly disciplined and because the membership had faith in the PCI's mission. The present debate, if Longo fails to control it, could turn symptoms of discontent among the cadres into outright factionalism which would severely undermine party unity.

Party leaders publicly insist that "democratic centralism" be used in such a way as to permit meaningful participation by the cadres in party decision making. At the party's Conference on Organization last March, Ingrao and other left-wingers

vigorously pushed this line, but they were pulled up short by Togliatti. Whether or not his successors can control the left on this issue remains to be seen, but the odds appear to be against it.

The Membership Problem

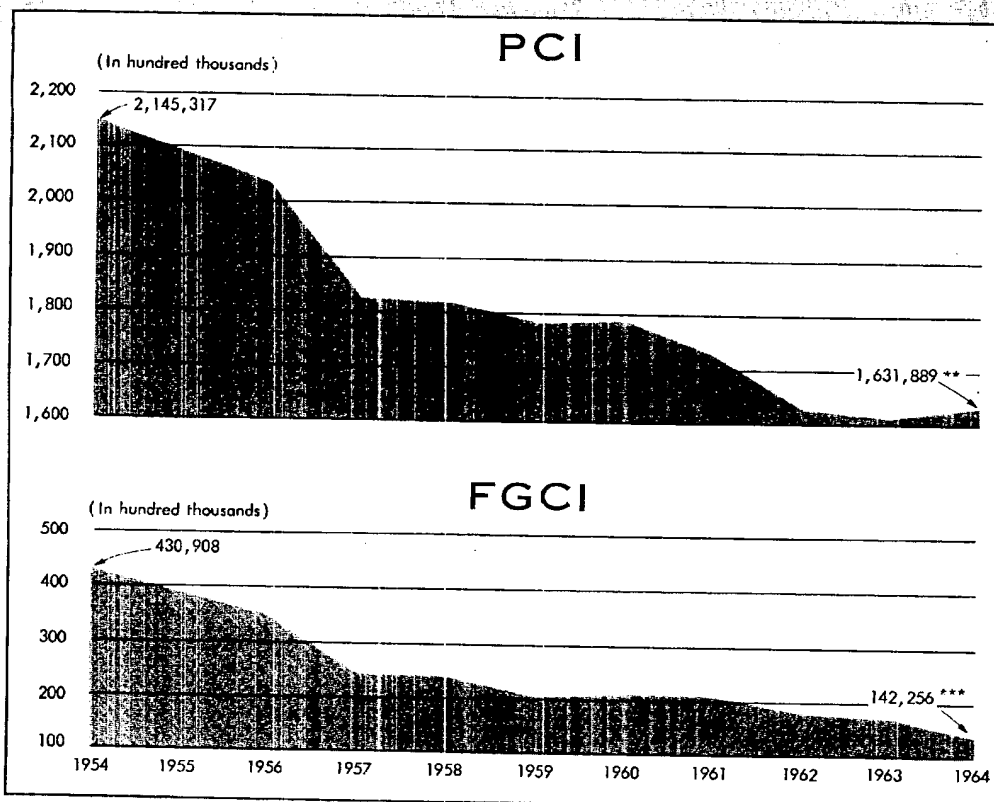
In the past decade, membership in the PCI has dropped by almost 25 percent--513,000--and that of its youth organization (FGCI) by 60 percent--290,000. The party anticipated that membership losses would occur as a result of its adaptation to socioeconomic changes in Italy, but it probably did not anticipate losses on this scale. Although all party leaders express concern publicly over membership losses, this is somewhat exaggerated and is, in part, an attempt to spur party cadres to intensify their activities.

The party, moreover, is troubled by the fact that the gap between its voting strength and its membership is greatest in industrial centers even though the number of industrial workers in Italy has been rising sharply. The FGCI membership drop in part reflects the inclusion of many of these into the PCI proper; the failure to attract young members in any significant numbers is a nagging worry.

The party, nonetheless, remains the second largest force in Italian politics. Its membership is as large as, or

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ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY & YOUTH MOVEMENT (FGCI) MEMBERSHIP DATA*



ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERSHIP BY OCCUPATION*

	1954		1963	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Workers (in industry)	856,314	40.0	643,733	39.5
Laborers and Salaried Employees	382,257	17.8	206,684	12.7
Sharecroppers and Tenant Farmers	262,227	12.2	173,975	10.7
Farm Owners	84,317	3.9	91,374	5.6
Craftsmen, Tradesmen, & Small Entrepreneurs	112,063	5.2	101,818	6.2
Professional Men				
Intellectuals & Teachers	11,398	0.5	9,496	0.6
Office & Technical Workers	47,433	2.2	36,828	2.2
Students	6,252	0.3	5,313	0.3
Housewives	289,148	13.5	202,327	12.4
Employed at Domicile [¶]			15,565	1.0
Pensioners [¶]			113,986	7.0
Others	93,903	4.4	29,451	1.8

*Critica Marxista, Sept.-Dec. 1963 issue, pp. 196-7

** As of 15 June; L'Unita

*** as of 10 April; L'Unita

[¶]In 1954 the category "Pensioners" and this group was probably distributed among the other categories and in that for "Others." Similarly there was no category for those "Employed at Domicile," who were included in the category "Housewives."

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larger than, that of the Christian Democrats. In the April 1963 parliamentary elections it won 7.8 million votes, a gain of over one million in five years. The gain attests to the party's ability to exploit the "opening to the left" for its own purposes as well as its excellent organizational structure. One out of every four Italians votes for the party out of disenchantment with the failure of previous governments to enact socioeconomic reforms and through a conviction that the PCI is the most effective instrument for forcing successive governments to adopt policies that will contribute to a better way of life.

The PCI and the Center-Left

Since 1955, the Socialist Party (PSI) of Pietro Nenni has painfully moved away from close cooperation with the Communists. In January 1964, a significant number of Socialists, representing much of the party's pro-Communist left wing, renounced Nenni's party and founded the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP). Relations now between the PCI and the PSI have become acrimonious. Communist Party leaders have, however, carefully distinguished between Nenni and his closest followers--who they claim are breaking the "unity of the working class"--and the PSI as a whole. The Socialist participation in the government since last December is the most serious potential threat that the PCI's "national unity" tactic has suffered since the end of the war. If the Socialists can convincingly claim that their

hand in the government made possible the enactment of meaningful reforms, they might eventually be able to make deep inroads into the PCI's mass support.

Faced with the fact of the center-left, Togliatti stressed that a "real turn to the left"--that is, genuine progress on the reform front--was out of the question without the PCI. He also asserted that the Socialist leaders had been seduced by the Christian Democrats into compromising the very "class character" of their party.

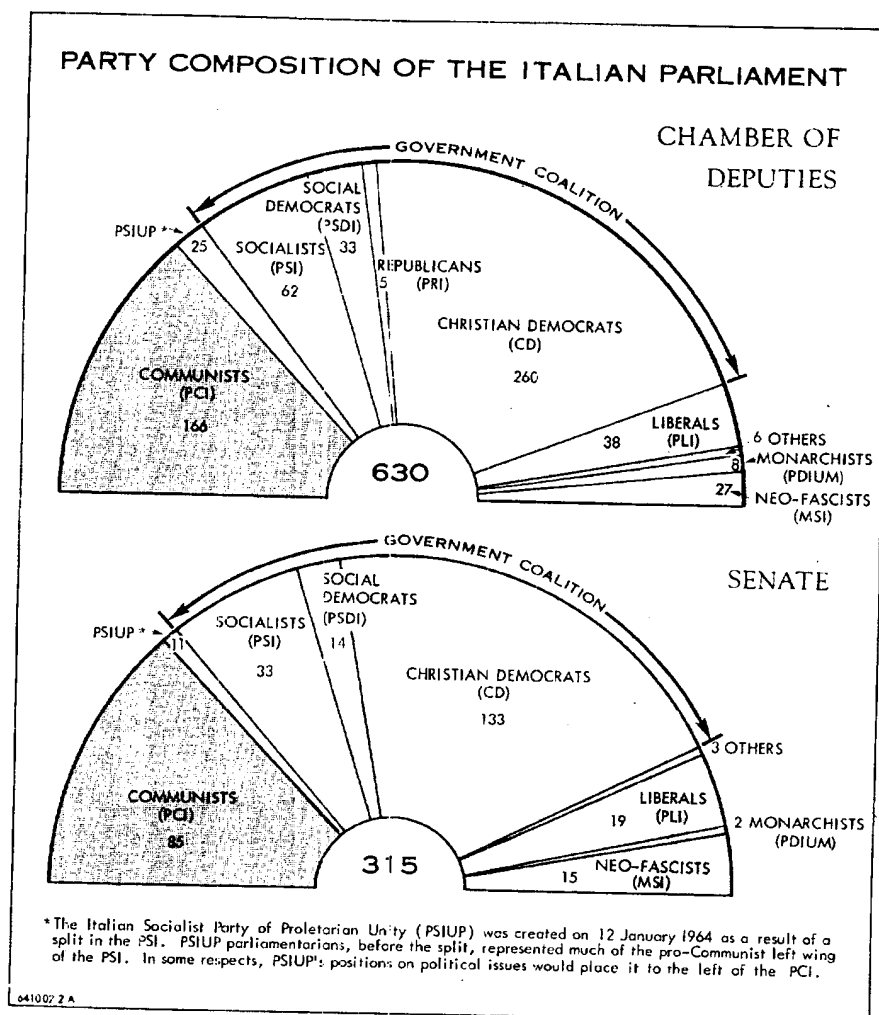
The PCI has also called periodic strikes in various sections of the economy. This has been aimed both at the hamstringing the government's economic programs and embarrassing the Socialist leaders before their rank and file, since the PSI members retain their affiliation with the Communist-dominated, Trade Union Confederation (CGIL).

Positions on International Communism

The PCI is by far the largest Communist Party in Western Europe, with almost four times as many members as all other Western European Communist parties combined. The party has vigorously promoted its ideas on what tactics should be employed by Communists in advanced "capitalist" societies using its own successful growth as evidence.

The PCI's "doubts and reservations" on the advisability of an international Communist conference stem in part from its fear that by going along with Moscow's tactics against

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Peiping the PCI would expose itself to renewed charges that it is "taking orders from Moscow," and thus adversely affect its domestic image. There is also considerable apprehension that a Sino-Soviet showdown would increase factionalism in the PCI and perhaps even bring about a split in the left.

The so-called "Chinese" elements in the PCI have lately increased in numbers, but they still represent only an insignificant minority. Some fifty representatives of his persuasion, coming from most of Italy's larger cities, are reliably reported to have held a national strategy meeting last June. They are said to have decided to remain in the party, proselytize, and initiate a program of creating internal dissension within the party.

Togliatti's last writing underscored the Italian resistance to Moscow's attempts to impose disciplined unity on pro-Moscow parties and recorded disapproval of the methods the Soviet party has been using. Longo has reiterated that the PCI will attend the mid-December meeting in Moscow, but has said it would follow Togliatti's injunction against "excommunicating" the Chinese. Togliatti had also reserved the specific right to "expound and explain" the PCI's views on the international situation. However, the PCI's dependence upon the Soviet Union for financial assistance and its preoccupation with maintaining some measure of unity in the international movement place important

limitations on the degree of "autonomy" the PCI will actually be able to maintain.

Outlook

It is too early to predict how the PCI's efforts to cope with problems posed by Togliatti's death will turn out. It would appear, however, that the party's present high caliber leadership, together with its strong organizational structure will forestall any significant loss of strength in the foreseeable future. In this connection, a more vigorous anti-Communist government program will be a necessary component to reduce Communist influence.

Moreover, Communist power in Italy will not be diminished in any appreciable measure until the underlying conditions that form the foundation of its mass appeal are corrected. Despite a marked improvement in living standards in recent years, economic disparities are still widespread and the PCI has been able to exploit the ineffectiveness of past governments to adequately deal with this and many other basic socioeconomic problems.

The center-left government's program provides for corrective action for most of these problems, but its failure thus far to implement the program may make it possible for the Communists once again to enlarge their share of the vote in the upcoming national elections. (~~SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~)

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